

Eggs are a popular item to direct market, and selling eggs is a relatively easy enterprise to begin. Technically, an “egg” refers to the shell egg of chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, guinea fowl, and any other species of poultry. Farmers with a flock that is under 3,000 hens are exempt from USDA grade requirements and fall under state law Chapter 69.25 RCW.

This fact sheet includes information on:

- On-farm sales and Community Supported Agriculture regulations.
- Egg Handler/Dealer License.
- Facility requirements for eggs.
- Egg handling: cleaning and refrigeration.
- Packaging eggs and labeling cartons for off-farm sales.
- Distribution.
- Retail sales and health department jurisdiction.

On-Farm Sales and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Regulations

Farmers who sell eggs from their own flocks and directly to consumers at the place of production (i.e., their home, farm, or to members at a CSA pick-up location) do not need an “Egg Handler/Dealer” License. For these sales, farmers are also not required to use Egg Seals, labels, or new cartons. However, eggs must always be handled with consumer safety in mind. Clean containers must be used, and eggs must be stored at 45° F or less.

Egg Handler/Dealer License

The Egg Handler/Dealer License is required for any person or business that:

- Produces, handles, or contracts for eggs for sale.
- Obtains possession or control of eggs.
- Processes eggs.

A Washington State Egg Handler/Dealer License is required for anyone selling to the end consumer at any off-farm site or selling eggs that are not from their flock. Specifically, the Washington State Egg Handler/

Dealer License is also required for any person or business that:

- Sells or barter eggs to wholesalers, dealers, retailers within or into Washington; OR
- Produces, handles, contracts for, or obtains possession or control of eggs for sale or barter to wholesalers, dealers or retailers within or into Washington.

Licensed egg handler or dealers are required to meet standards for egg handling facilities, cleaning, refrigeration, packaging and labeling, distribution and sales. An Egg Handler/Dealer License must be posted at each location where the licensee cleans and holds eggs.

The Egg Handler/Dealer License is a specialty endorsement to the Business License obtained through the State of Washington Business Licensing Service. In 2019, it cost \$30 for the first location and \$15 for each additional location. Businesses will need a Business License in order to get the Egg Handler/Dealer License. There is a \$19 processing fee to obtain or make updates to a Business License. For more information, email BLS@dor.wa.gov, visit dor.wa.gov and search “egg dealer” or call 800-451-7985.

Once the license has been issued, the WSDA Food Safety Program visits the Egg Handler/Dealer License holder’s site to inspect egg handling facilities and practices. During these visits the inspector reviews egg regulations, including egg packaging and labeling and egg temperature requirements.

Please contact the WSDA Food Safety Program if you have questions or concerns about egg handling and labeling at foodsafety@agr.wa.gov or 360-902-1876.

An Egg Handler/Dealer License is also required for any producer wanting to donate eggs to an emergency food organization, including food banks or food pantries.

Facility Requirements for Eggs

A licensed egg handling facility must include a designated work area, designated storage, potable water, a hand-washing station, and a refrigerator.

A designated work area must be separate from domestic living areas. Acceptable work areas may be an area in the basement, garage, or outbuilding. Unacceptable work areas are domestic living areas, kitchens, laundry rooms, and bathrooms.

The work area for egg handling requires a sanitary work surface that is smooth, durable, and easily cleanable. This work surface must be cleaned and sanitized before each use. Any sinks, drain boards, or other equipment used for the egg handling operation must also be cleaned and sanitized before each use.

Designated storage areas are required for new packaging materials, utensils, and equipment that may be used for the egg handling practices. These items must be protected from contamination (e.g., moisture, strong odors, dust or insects).

Potable water is required for egg handling practices. Individual water wells require an annual bacteriological test (i.e., *Coliform bacteria*). Commercial bottled water may be used.

Hand washing stations must be conveniently located in the egg handling work area and near the toilet facilities. Hand washing at the work area may be provided by a hot and cold plumbed hand sink or a portable hand wash "system" (such as a 5-gallon insulated container with a continuous flow spigot, filled with warm water between 100° F and 120° F, a 5-gallon pail to catch wash/rinse water; a pump-type liquid soap dispenser and paper towels).

A designated refrigerator for the eggs is required. The refrigerator does not need to be new or commercial and may be placed outside the egg handling area such as in the garage. The refrigerator needs a thermometer that enables you to verify that egg storage is maintained at 40° F to 45° F.

Egg Handling: Cleaning and Refrigeration

The following steps and procedures are the WSDA Shell Egg Producer Guidelines for Off-Farm Sales.

1. Hands must be thoroughly washed before starting egg handling and during egg handling to minimize cross-contamination of "finished" eggs.

2. Maintain clean and dry nest boxes; change nest material as needed to reduce dirty eggs. Gather eggs at least once daily.
3. Soon after collecting, clean eggs as needed. Cleaning eggs that have been refrigerated below 55° F may cause shells to crack or "check". Using only minimal cleaning protects the natural protective covering on the shell.
4. The wash water should be a minimum of 90° F, which is warm to the touch, and shall be at least 20° F warmer than the temperature of the eggs to be washed. Wash water must be potable (meets drinking water quality standards).
5. Since eggs are a perishable food, cleaned eggs must be held under sanitary conditions with refrigeration temperatures at 45° F or less. The cleaned eggs can be packaged later.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Egg Cleaning Methods

ACCEPTABLE	Dry cleaning by lightly "sanding" the stains or minimal dirty areas with sand paper.
	Using potable water in a hand spray bottle and immediately wiping dry with a single-service paper towel.
	Briefly rinsing with potable running water spray and immediately wiping dry with a single-service paper towel.
UNACCEPTABLE	Submerging shell eggs in water or any other solution.
	Using cleaners that are not food grade and approved for shell egg cleaning.

Note that the porous eggshell is not impervious to odors, chemicals, and "off" flavors.

Packaging Eggs and Labeling Cartons for Off-Farm Sales

For off-farm sales, shell egg producers are required to sell eggs in any type of new packaging or container, provided that the eggs are protected from damage and/or adulteration. *Adulteration* means contact with "leaking or damaged eggs or any other poisonous or deleterious substance that may render the contents injurious to health."

For off-farm sales, it is unlawful to reuse old egg containers to package eggs. It is also unlawful to package eggs in containers labeled with another firm's name and/or identification number.

There are specific requirements for what needs to be on an egg container. Each new carton must include:

- Common name of the food: "Eggs."
- If other than a chicken egg, then the type of egg: e.g., "Duck."
- Quantity, the number of eggs: e.g., "One Dozen."
- Name and address of the egg producer.
- The statement: "Keep Refrigerated."
- The statement: "SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS: To prevent illness from bacteria: Keep eggs refrigerated, cook eggs until yolks are firm, and cook foods containing eggs thoroughly."
- If the eggs are not graded and not weighed, do not label with a grade or size. Indicate "Ungraded" or "Not graded" (see details below).
- A "Pull Date" or "Best By" date (see details below).
- An Egg Seal (see details below).

Labels designed on a home computer and printed on stock, self-adhesive labels are acceptable.


Grading: Shell eggs are subject to grading and sizing. Quality designations and sizing weight ranges are determined by candling and weighing (Chapter 16-104 WAC and the USDA Egg Grading Manual). If the eggs are ungraded and not weighed, do not label the packages/cartons with any grade or size.

Pull Date: Cartons must include a "Pull Date" or "Best By" date. It may be hand written on the end of the carton or in a conspicuous location that is clearly visible. The "Pull Date" must first show the month then the day of the month (e.g. Jun 14 or 06 14). Recommended dates are 30 days after production and should not exceed 45 days after production.

Egg Seals: Every egg carton is required to have an "Egg Seal" sticker for each dozen eggs if they are sold at locations off the farm, including farmers markets and retail outlets.

Eggs that are sold in bulk are required to provide the same information listed above for egg containers, with two exceptions.

1. The container for eggs sold in bulk needs a "Bulk Egg Seal" instead of the regular dozen egg seal;
2. The container is not required to include the quantity.



Egg Seal stickers can be purchased directly from the WSDA Food Safety Program by visiting agr.wa.gov and searching for, "Eggs" and completing the form found online at the "obtaining egg seals" link. Egg Seals for dozen containers are sold in batches of one thousand for \$2.68. The form must be mailed with a check for the appropriate amount to WSDA at the address on the form.

Bulk Egg Seals for 5 or 15 dozen eggs are also available from WSDA on the Egg Seal order form. Businesses selling very large quantities of eggs (e.g., over 3,000 eggs a month) may request an egg number form that can be printed on cartons instead of using egg seal stickers. Contact the WSDA Food Safety Program about egg numbers.

Distribution

Egg packages and cartons should be transported in an easily cleanable refrigeration unit, or portable cooler with frozen gel packs to maintain a temperature of 45° F or less until eggs are distributed to retail outlets or sold to consumers.

Retail Sales and Local Health Department Jurisdiction

Local health departments have jurisdiction over farmers markets and retail stores that sell eggs. They may require additional permits and conduct inspections to ensure farm compliance with local rules and regulations, such as labeling and cold storage.



5. Licensing

46. Selling and Processing Poultry